



It is normal for young children to go through a period of “throwing tantrums. It is most common around 2 years of age which is where the “terrible two’s” saying comes from. In most children, tantrums have become infrequent or ceased by ages 3 or 4 but in some circumstances it can continue until a child is much older. This will depend on the child’s personality and on how the behaviour has been managed.

Tantrums can range from crying through to rolling around on the floor, kicking and screaming and can last anywhere from 20 to 30 seconds through to an hour or so. They can be very stressful for the parent dealing with them.

Tantrums usually occur in young children when they are:

- Frustrated
- Angry
- Things don’t go the way they wanted or expected
- Are told “no”
- When they are unable to manage difficult tasks
- Don’t have the words to communicate what they want or feel
- When they are over tired

Managing Tantrums

1. Try to be prepared for situation you know may spark off a tantrum- e.g. don’t take them to a busy shopping centre when you know they are over tired

2. With young children use “Planned Ignoring”- this is when you walk away, do not look or speak to the child until they have quietened down. Once they have quietened praise them and look for something positive to do together. This technique can only work when you can control the environment (e.g. at home) - so it may be hard to use when you are out shopping or have visitors
3. Give an instruction to “stop screaming and speak nicely” or “stop screaming and speak in a quiet voice” - praise them if they do and look for a positive activity to involve them in. Instructions should be made in a calm firm voice not by yelling or losing control yourself. It is also a good idea to squat and look your child directly in the eyes, rather than standing over them. This helps the child feel they are on the same level as you and avoids the power stance of being smaller than you.
4. If they do not stop - Follow up with an instruction to go to “Time Out” or “Quiet Time”. Be calm and firm: “You are not quiet so you must go to time out now”. Time out should be a quiet, safe space away from your attention - either the corner of a room facing the wall or a quiet, not very interesting room. Some children will take themselves to time out but most at this early stage will require the adult to take them. Do not make a fuss or talk to the child further as they go to time out. Tell them they must be quiet for 1 minute before they can come out.
5. Once quieted they can rejoin a positive activity with you. Avoid fighting about them coming out at the end of this time if they want to stay and sulk. Let them come out when ready after the one minute is up.
6. If they start another tantrum- repeat the above steps calmly

If this is a new management strategy remember that initially the behaviour may worsen (increase in frequency or severity) until your child understands that this is what will happen every time.

Dealing with Tantrums in Public

1. Try planned ignoring first
2. If this doesn't work go to quiet time away from the busy stimuli- sit in the car or find a quiet space somewhere. Tell them to sit quietly and when quiet return to what you were doing.
3. If the child persists, be prepared to leave immediately and return home placing them in time out once you get home. Following through with your plan and being consistent will be the most important step here.

Seeking help

If you are unsure how to manage a particular problem you can seek advice from a child psychologist or attend a parenting group.

The **Lakeside Rooms** has a number of experienced Child Psychologists - go to www.lakesiderooms.com.au or call the Lakeside Rooms on 55620466 for more details.

See handout **Tips about Toddlers** for more information

Useful Parenting websites:

- Parent Easy Guides (<https://www.education.sa.gov.au/parenting-and-child-care/parenting/parenting-sa/parent-easy-guides>)
Contains detailed behaviour management advice and tip sheets
- Initiative parents resources (<https://www.kidsmatter.edu.au/>) Contains many downloadable resources for parents in relation to children's mental health and wellbeing.
- Positive Parenting Resources (<https://positiveparenting.com/parenting-advice/>)
- Australian Childhood Foundation (<https://www.bringingupgreatkids.org/en/u>)
- Australian Institute of Family Studies (<http://www.aifs.gov.au/>)
- Early Childhood Australia (<http://www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/>)
- Families Australia (<http://www.familiesaustralia.org.au/>)
- Family Relationships (<http://www.familyrelationships.gov.au/>)
- Raising Children Network (<http://raisingchildren.net.au/>)
- Parenting Teens (<http://parentingteens.about.com/>)
- Parentlink (<https://www.parentlink.act.gov.au/home-spf2>)
Government advise site for parenting children and teenagers